United Nations A/C.4/53/SR.21

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
4 December 1998

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 21st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 November 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Macedo ..... (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 86: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/53/21/Rev.1, A/53/509)

1. **Mr. Sin Song-chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation believed that the establishment of a new world information and communication order was a matter of urgency. The developing countries, recognizing the important role of public information in democratizing international society and creating a favourable atmosphere for the maintenance of international peace and security, had made great efforts towards that goal. Yet a wide disparity still existed between the developed and the developing countries in the field of information, and the situation was further deteriorating because the rapid development of information and communications technology was confined to only a few countries, and the developing countries remained marginalized. In particular, the mass media were still being mobilized in psychological warfare against the developing countries, while ignoring their legitimate call for peace and development. His delegation therefore stressed the need to correct the current inequitable information system in conformity with the common interests of both developed and developing countries.

2. The maintenance of objectivity, impartiality and accuracy in publications of the Department of Public Information should be the main principle in United Nations public information activities. Priority should be given to ensuring correct and balanced transmission of the views of Member States to the world through the United Nations public information activities, so as to avoid giving the impression that those activities served specific countries by publicizing or justifying their national policies: United Nations public information activities should be consistent with the universal character of the Organization. In that context, his delegation fully supported the statement by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and in particular his request to the Secretary-General that the United Nations homepage and all its sites should be regarded in the same way as other publications.

3. The training of information officials from the developing countries was one of the most important ways of promoting awareness in the developing countries about United Nations public information activities and enhancing their information capacity, and should continue on the basis of geographical rotation.

4. **Mr. Wrabetz** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European associated countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association member of the European Economic Area Iceland, said that freedom of information was an essential element in the promotion and preservation of democracy in all parts of the world; without a free press and freedom of expression at all levels, no society could claim to uphold justice, equality and fair treatment under the law. Freedom of information was the cornerstone from which many other freedoms flowed; freedom of the press and the free flow of information and ideas were basic prerequisites for several of the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The dissemination of information by the media in a fair and open manner could also play an important role in civil society, fostering mutual understanding and reconciliation while combating hatred, intolerance and discrimination. Attempts to control the press, or to use violence to intimidate journalists or publications, must be condemned unreservedly, wherever they occurred.

5. The European Union supported the work of the Committee on Information and endorsed its recommendations.

6. A distinctive feature of the modern United Nations was the cooperative structure which existed between developed and developing countries; what was required between all countries was a willingness to provide free and unrestricted information to and between all parts of the world. The European Union was pleased that the annual draft resolutions recommended to the Committee by the Committee on Information were adopted by consensus; at the same time, consideration should be given to replacing, on the basis of consensus, any language which might be regarded as obsolete.

7. The European Union commended the Department of Public Information for the effective and professional service it provided, particularly at a time when the need to project a positive image of the United Nations to world public opinion had never been greater, and urged the Department to concentrate its resources on the activities prioritized in draft resolution B. The European Union welcomed the launch of the Arabic and Chinese versions of the United Nations website, and appreciated the efforts undertaken to consider the possibility of establishing an international United Nations broadcasting capacity.

8. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the United Nations was one of the world's major sources of

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information, and the Secretary-General was to be commended for his work aimed at strengthening the Organization's information-related capabilities. The Syrian Arab Republic was prepared to continue its cooperation to that end with the Department of Public Information, which had done excellent work in providing training for communication and information workers in the developing countries. Increased financial resources would make it possible to achieve even more along those lines.

9. In order to achieve a new world information order reflecting the concerns of all peoples and their aspiration to a world in which equality and mutual respect would be paramount values, a more balanced flow of information, based on a greater diversity of sources, was essential. It was regrettable that there was still such a gap between the developed and the developing countries in respect of communication infrastructure and technology.

10. His delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. A major aspect of the information function of the United Nations was to speak out on behalf of those who had no voice throughout the world, and in the Middle East in particular, by disseminating General Assembly resolutions that condemned alien occupation and supported efforts to achieve peace with justice, promote development and environmental protection, eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and the like.

11. The information disseminated by the United Nations should reflect the fundamental concerns of Member States. The Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information was to be commended for his tireless efforts to ensure that that information was objective and unbiased, and thereby to safeguard the Organization's credibility and reputation throughout the world.

12. The Department of Public Information should be strengthened to give it greater effectiveness in the performance of its tasks, including the publication of United Nations documents in all the Organization's official languages.

13. The decision to create a United Nations homepage on the Internet was commendable, as that would enhance the reach of its information effort and carry word of the Organization's work directly to Member States. The recent addition of Chinese and Arabic versions of the homepage was particularly welcome. His delegation also supported the enhancement of United Nations broadcasting capabilities, as the Organization's positions and orientation were best expressed when it spoke for itself.

14. United Nations information centres should be preserved and strengthened, with mutual consultation with the countries concerned to determine their status in individual cases.

15. The Committee on Information had a central role to play in orienting the Organization's action in the area of information. His delegation was confident that it would continue to carry out its tasks satisfactorily, thanks to its commitment to the principles of democracy and transparency and the spirit of cooperation and flexibility that inspired its activities.

16. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal) said that the free flow of information coupled with freedom of expression were the social and political basis for democracy, human development and prosperity. The specialized agencies should consequently seek innovative ways of communicating their ideas and expanding grass-roots participation in development initiatives.

17. Public information also strengthened the impact of the work of the United Nations. The ongoing reorganization of the Department of Public Information should result in a reorientation of the United Nations information and communications policies according to clearly defined goals that should then become central to the strategic management of the Organization as a whole. In the area of peacekeeping as well, the importance of the information component could not be overestimated.

18. Greater reliance on electronic media was allowing the Department of Public Information to disseminate information quickly. It was regrettable, however, that the United Nations had not done more to reduce the disparities between the developed and the developing countries in the flow of information and in the ability to take advantage of innovations in information technology. Developing countries and their public and private media should, moreover, be enabled to develop their own information and communications policies freely and independently.

19. Radio was one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media, and as such its significance was greatest in the developing world. Nepal was pleased that the Committee on Information would at its 1999 session consider the design and scope of a pilot project for the resumption of direct broadcasting by United Nations Radio which should, if possible, include some programmes in the Nepali language.

20. **Mr. Sai** (Algeria) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

21. The increasingly widespread use of computers in the field of information and the growth of the Internet were spreading knowledge and drawing peoples closer together into what was truly becoming a global village. However, there were legitimate concerns about the tendency of globalization to sweep away the fundamental values of peoples in a flood of alien concepts.

22. He expressed satisfaction at the recent inauguration of Arabic and Chinese versions of the United Nations Internet homepage, which had thus become available in all the Organization's official languages. To enable the Arabic version to reach the level of its French and English counterparts, a permanent budget line should be introduced for support to it.

23. The plans by Department of Public Information for short-wave broadcasting and an experimental programming service in English and French covering parts of Africa and Europe were unobjectionable in principle. However, they did not take adequately into consideration the multilingual aspect of the Organization's activities. The more languages the United Nations broadcasting service used, the more people it would reach: Arabic-language broadcasts, for example, would find audiences throughout the Arab world.

24. The explosive growth and development of electronic media of communication had not made the print media obsolete. Many of the world's peoples, especially in the developing countries, continued to rely on print, and it was to be hoped that the Department of Public Information would bear that fact in mind.

25. Multilingualism seemed to have regressed of late at the United Nations, with considerable quantitative and qualitative declines in the Organization's Arabic-language publications. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, for example, had as yet been published only in English and French. The fact that such a valuable source of information had not yet appeared in the other language versions was unfortunate.

26. **Mr. Fils-Aimé** (Haiti) said that his delegation supported the statement made by Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community. It was deplorable that a large proportion of the world population was not aware of the crucial role played by the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security and in economic and social development. His delegation was therefore in favour of the new world information and communication order, which would reduce the gap between the developed and developing countries in respect of technological capacity.

27. Information played a vital role in the promotion of a democratic society. Freedom of expression and information were essential to any democracy. The Haitian people, after years of brutal repression, attached particular importance to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

28. His delegation greatly appreciated the assistance provided by the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti to the Haitian police force. However, it was important for the population to be well informed of the mandates and objectives of the mission; his delegation therefore requested the Department of Public Information to step up its efforts to reach the public.

29. The radio programme "Nouveaux Contacts" produced for the French-speaking countries of the Caribbean would be more effective if it was not simply an adaptation of English-language broadcasts. General Assembly resolution 38/82 B must be implemented. His delegation called for the establishment of a United Nations information centre at Port au Prince. It welcomed the training provided to young journalists from developing countries by the Department of Public Information; a young journalist from Haiti had participated in 1998.

30. His delegation commended the efforts made by the Department of Public Information to reaffirm its commitment to the democratic principles of pluralism and diversity, including the creation of Arabic and Chinese versions of the homepage.

31. **Mr. Monsour** (Lebanon) noted that information was a highly effective means of fostering cultural interchange, mutual understanding and cooperation among the various peoples of the world, and drawing them closer together, in a comprehensive context of economic and human development. The Organization's recent appearance on the Internet would increase its information outreach. However, the continuing enormous gap between the advanced countries and the developing countries in the area of information and communication technology could be filled only with the help of meaningful participation on the part of the United Nations and the advanced countries. Accordingly, the Organization needed a clear strategic information policy characterized by transparency and equity, which would be a useful tool in promoting development and fostering international peace and security; consequently, budget cuts should not be allowed to detract from the implementation of information policies relating to those issues.

32. United Nations information centres in developing countries should be adequately funded, as they played an important role in shaping public opinion in those countries. His delegation supported the integration of information

centres with field offices on a case-by-case basis, after consultation with the host country concerned. Despite the explosive growth of the electronic media, many people, especially in the developing countries, continued to depend on traditional media, and the Organization should strengthen its publication programmes in all its official languages.

33. He emphasized the importance of a new world information and communication order, characterized by balance in the free flow of information and the free transfer of information technology. At present, media bias too often tended to bring the cultures, beliefs, customs and traditions of many of the world's people into disrepute, and it was time to find a way to correct that situation.

34. **Mr. Tasmagambetov** (Kazakhstan) said that it was indisputable that the United Nations could achieve its goal of disseminating the ideas of peace, justice and development throughout the world only if information and communications were assured.

35. The conceptual framework for the Organization's communications and information policies set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/509), constituted a sound basis; however, its implementation was the main condition for progress in ensuring the international community's support for the United Nations, which was essential for its long-term survival.

36. In general, his delegation supported the measures taken by the Department of Public Information to improve its work, and attached importance to strengthening the information components of peacekeeping operations and clarifying priority activities. It hoped that the Strategic Communications Planning Group would contribute to achieving the agreed goals of the Department. It supported the steps to create a true culture of communications, give the Organization greater transparency, and expand partnership with the mass media and business circles, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.

37. One of the priorities of the Department was to strengthen the Organization's ability to communicate at the country and regional levels. His delegation drew attention to the humanitarian, environmental and economic problems in Kazakhstan resulting from the many years of nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk. The General Assembly had just adopted by consensus a resolution on the subject which included a request to the Secretary-General to provide increased information to the world community about the problems and needs of the Semipalatinsk region. Although the problem could not be solved all at once, it was important to make the first step in that direction; the Department of Public Information could make use of its local information centres in that respect.

38. There was no doubt that the vast information available to the United Nations on current issues was vitally needed in order to ensure stable development for the entire world community. Clearly, information reform of the United Nations must involve use of electronic means, especially the Internet; at the same time, the role of the traditional media — the press, television and the radio — should not be diminished.

39. In connection with the development of a United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity, he drew attention to the need to increase the scope of United Nations radio broadcasts in all official languages, including Russian.

40. The United Nations must take the necessary steps to ensure that all countries received the benefits of the technical progress in communications in resolving problems of socio-economic development and peace-building. Priority must be given to establishing a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order on the basis of a balanced flow of information in a world where differences in levels of technical development were increasing.

41. **Mr. Abubakar** (Nigeria) said that the people of the world, and especially those of the developing countries, were eager to know what the United Nations was doing and could do to improve their situation, especially in the alleviation of poverty, giving them a sense of belonging and, eventually, full participation in the programmes and activities of the United Nations.

42. On the threshold of the next millennium, information and communication technologies must benefit all countries. Despite the technological breakthrough in the information super highway, radio remained one of the easiest and cheapest mediums of communication, and had the greatest impact on the majority of people around the world. The United Nations international radio initiative should reach a worldwide audience and serve the interests of all regions.

43. The United Nations information centres constituted a key component of United Nations outreach, especially for developing countries. His delegation believed that the integration of those centres with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should be implemented on a case-by-case basis so as to better serve the overall interests of Member States and ensure efficiency and effectiveness. It shared the views expressed by the Group of 77 and China in that regard.

44. **Mr. Turbi** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the contemporary revolution in the field of information and

communications might be dangerous if it were not harnessed for the benefit of mankind at large. His delegation hoped for the advent of a world in which information served to enlighten and free human minds, not one in which the wealthy would possess information while the poor would be deprived of it. Already the developing countries had been marginalized, owing to the monopoly of the means of information and communication by a few. His own country had had to suffer from one powerful State's domination of the media, which had disseminated negative propaganda in its efforts to impose its own policies for ends that were incompatible with the interests and aspirations of the Libyan people. But the Libyan people would never submit, even though they had been subjected to coercive measures as well as systematic media campaigns that were not characterized by regard for factual objectivity. The international community demanded a code of conduct in the field of information, for the sake of justice, autonomy, and economic, social and cultural development, not to mention the right of the international community to be adequately informed about events in the world. The United Nations bore a heavy responsibility in that connection.

45. **Mr. Speransky** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the strategic objectives, functional priorities and basic elements of the conceptual framework proposed by the Secretary-General, as well as his recommendations concerning the strengthening of the work of the United Nations in the area of public information. It welcomed the Department's efforts to enhance the Organization's capabilities of using modern multimedia technologies, in particular the Internet. The Russian Federation was interested in the possibilities for Russian educational institutions to participate in the CyberSchoolBus project. It supported the Department's efforts to expand the United Nations homepage in all the official languages of the United Nations, particularly Russian. It approved the measures to enhance the efficiency of United Nations communications activities at the national and regional levels, and hoped that the work of the Media Response Group would help create a realistic image of the United Nations within the world community.

46. . At the same time, the Department should continue to use traditional means of dissemination of information about the United Nations which were the most accessible and, sometimes, indispensable communications channel for many users. There was no doubt that radio was still the most widely used and popular mass medium in the world. The United Nations had to deliver information to broad target audiences in various countries at different levels of development with different capabilities to receive and process information.

47. His delegation noted with satisfaction that Russian, spoken by tens of millions of people in different countries of the world, occupied a certain place in United Nations radio broadcasting, and hoped that the Department would pay more attention to its programmes in Russian, for which there was still only one specialist.

48. His delegation agreed that the use of the radio broadcasting facilities of Member States could be a way of saving budgetary resources. The Russian Federation possessed significant technical capacity for radio broadcasting, including short-wave broadcasting, over vast territories, which could be put to use.

49. His delegation was pleased that the Dag Hammarskjöld library was expanding its range of electronic services, in particular the "UN in the News" programme, electronic information retrieval and dissemination of information via electronic mail.

50. The Russian Federation fully supported the key role of information centres in disseminating information about the Organization at the national and regional levels. It drew the Department's attention to the need to expand the publishing activities of the Moscow Information Centre in terms of quantity and variety of publications. In the reform of the system of information centres, the opinion of the host country must be taken into account in each case. Since the Moscow Information Centre was playing an increasing role in the dissemination of information about the work of the Organization and the mobilization of public support for the United Nations in the Russian Federation and in other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, its autonomy should be preserved to the maximum extent.

51. The experience and potential acquired by other international and particularly regional organizations in the information field should be studied and used in future activities.

52. His delegation hoped that the Committee on Information could continue to work in a spirit of cooperation and consensus.

53. **Mr. Al-Sindi** (Yemen) said that information had become a prerequisite for political freedoms, democracy and development. In the world of the twenty-first century, the means of information and communication would have to reflect the quickening pace of change with credibility and accuracy. Only through cooperation and the adoption of appropriate policies and priorities could the developing

countries hope to build adequate information and communication infrastructures that would enable them to preserve their independence and participate more fully in the free flow of information while strengthening the concepts of right, justice and equality and fostering cultural ties between peoples. The report prepared by the Committee on Information (A/53/21) dealt with the issues involved very satisfactorily.

54. His country attached particular importance to capacity-building and human resource development in the area of information and communication technology. Training programmes were an important aspect of the capacity-building process.

55. His delegation supported the draft resolution on information in the service of humanity (draft resolution A in document A/53/21/Rev.1) and hoped it would be applied, as it was a living and tangible embodiment of United Nations policies in the field of information.

56. The United Nations information centre in Sana'a was doing excellent work in disseminating information about the United Nations and its activities. In general, the United Nations information centres were useful institutions that deserved continued support.

57. The Department of Public Information was doing excellent work to extend the information outreach of the United Nations and provide it with an enhanced international broadcasting capacity. In particular, the inauguration of the Organization's Internet homepage in Arabic had been a welcome event.

58. **Mr. Chun Hae-jin** (Republic of Korea) said that the United Nations must ensure that all peoples shared the benefits of technological advances in communications and information. The reform initiatives set out by the Secretary-General in his report to the Committee on Information in May 1998 (A/AC.198/1998/2) marked a major step in that direction. The communications and information function should indeed be an integral part of the strategic management of the Organization, and a communications culture should be fostered throughout the United Nations system. A number of welcome structural measures with that in mind had been taken within the Secretariat over the past year.

59. It was of paramount importance for the United Nations to build global partnerships with the media, civil society and educational institutions. Thus, the recent establishment of a Media Response Group and a Writers' Group, in addition to the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) Club, would significantly increase the capacity to reach the general public and build a supportive constituency throughout the world.

60. His Government supported efforts to take full advantage of new information technologies, including the Internet and electronic publishing, and was encouraged by the progress in developing the United Nations website. Nevertheless, the Department of Public Information should maintain its outreach through traditional means such as the print media and radio and television broadcasting, since they still played a major role in many parts of the world. The forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the details of the pilot project for the development of a United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity for direct communication with the public would be of great interest, but the cost-effectiveness of the various options and the availability of funds must be weighed.

61. The Department of Public Information had done well to develop thematically integrated information programmes on priority United Nations issues, thus attracting greater public and private support. As a troop-contributing country, the Republic of Korea particularly welcomed the Department's activities on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, a key component of which was public information to increase international understanding of their role. Host countries and other Member States should also publicize the mandates of the various operations and the security issues involved in peacekeeping.

62. **Mr. Guani** (Uruguay) said that his delegation supported the objectives set out in the Secretary-General's timely call for a reorientation of the United Nations information and communications activities, particularly the need to publicize its work more effectively and to redirect the policies and activities of the Department of Public Information. In devising projects, the Department must bear in mind the realities in the various regions, some of which lacked the necessary infrastructure. The United Nations television and radio services were affected by the speed with which the United Nations was now able to provide information over the Internet; but the Department was wisely taking a balanced approach by not cutting back on conventional activities such as radio broadcasting. His delegation welcomed the attention being given to reaching a wider audience via short-wave radio, and supported the general lines of the Secretary-General's report on the establishment of the pilot project in that regard (A/AC.198/1998/4), while noting, however, that the report gave no details on financing or organizational arrangements. Given the current scarcity of funds, the use of short-wave broadcasting might not be the most appropriate solution.

63. The important activities of the various peacekeeping operations should be publicized directly from the field, for the contact with the local populations ensured the operational effectiveness of the forces. Despite the funding problems, United Nations Radio could play a unique role in that regard.

64. The Inter-American Press Association was at the moment holding its fifty-fourth assembly in Uruguay, a sign of the region's democratic commitment to freedom of the press; and it was a particular source of satisfaction to note that a free press was a reality in the majority of countries in the Americas.

65. **Mr. Houansou** (Benin) said that, in the era of the information revolution, the Department of Public Information had a major role in helping to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It was for the Department to reflect the activities of the other departments of the Organization and present to the entire world the successes, experiences and perspectives of the United Nations. If the United Nations message was to reach all corners of the globe, contacts with non-governmental organizations, the media, educational institutions and other parts of civil society were absolutely indispensable. The plan to expand the Department's working relations with other United Nations departments would facilitate the gathering of information, and an expanded cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) would facilitate its task of publicizing information.

66. The United Nations information centres were an important arm of the Department of Public Information, with an essential part to play particularly in the developing countries. The integration of the information centres with the UNDP field offices was a possibility to be discussed with each host country. Benin favoured such integration, and was currently setting up a "United Nations House" in the country.

67. The Organization was to be commended for having introduced new information technologies in its official languages, but must be vigilant in ensuring that such technologies contributed not to incitement to hatred or xenophobia but rather to the consolidation of international peace and security. At the same time, the United Nations must continue to use the traditional media, particularly to reach the developing countries and their delegations. The resumption of United Nations international radio broadcasting would allow it to broadcast directly its points of view on world issues, unhampered by censorship. United Nations Radio could also conclude specific agreements with national radio services to broadcast certain United Nations programmes in national languages. The Department of Public Information had made a considerable effort to take advantage of the linguistic diversity that was one of the riches of the Organization, but might consider taking a more balanced approach in using the working languages and the official languages in its publications.

68. The recommendation on adequate funding for the Department of Public Information made in the report of the Committee on Information (A/53/21/Rev.1) had his delegation's full support. The Department and UNESCO had been creative and enterprising in using the funds available to them.

69. **Mr. Hogen** (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information), responding to points made by delegations, which he assured the Committee would be seriously considered by his Department, said that it had been the view of the Committee on Information, after consultation with regional and substantive groups, that an important policy issue such as the integration of the United Nations information centres with the UNDP field offices should be taken up by the Committee itself before its consideration by the General Assembly. Accordingly, the report on the matter requested in resolution 52/220 would be drafted for consideration at that Committee's session in May 1999.

70. Regarding the United Nations information centres, a contribution by the Government of Romania towards the funding of local staff costs had made it possible to recruit an information officer for the Information Centre in Bucharest, while the Information Centre in Tokyo had been encouraged to work closely with its welcome new partner in Japan, the Academic Council for the United Nations, and with the United Nations Association there. Information centres worldwide had also been encouraged to work together with local United Nations associations. The Department was aware of the need to strengthen its representation in the Caribbean through its staffing of the United Nations Information Centre in Port of Spain, which covered 15 nations in the region. While there were no funds for an information officer in the UNDP field office in Jamaica, one of its staff members might be assigned as a focal point for information and as the liaison with the Port of Spain Information Centre, receiving advice, information, and perhaps training and other support. Similar cooperation had worked well in Fiji and Sydney.

71. Regarding radio broadcasts, the Department had consistently produced weekly programmes for dissemination in the Caribbean in French and, on a pattern consistent with those in other non-official languages of production in United Nations Radio, in Creole. Current resources allowed the

production of original programmes only in the official languages, with adaptations into non-official languages. Moreover, all programmes produced in non-official languages had to be specifically mandated by the General Assembly, as would be the case with any broadcasting in Nepali. Concerning the reinforcement of the Russian language staff of the Department's radio services, funds were again the problem, but a General Service post had been redeployed for a full-time Russian language assistant. The Department would also be submitting a report on the design of the pilot project for a United Nations short-wave radio broadcasting service to the May 1999 session of the Committee on Information. As for the request for the creation of a new post to service the United Nations homepage in Arabic, the improvement of the United Nations website services in all official languages, including Arabic, was a priority under the Department's reorientation but it could only be done by redeploying existing resources.

72. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take a joint decision on the two draft resolutions and the draft decision adopted by consensus by the Committee on Information and contained in paragraph 48 of its report (A/53/21/Rev.1).

73. *Draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision of the Committee on Information were adopted without a vote.*

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.